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King's Widow Poses Question Of Government Role In Death

From Our Press Services

NAIROBI, Kenya — The widow of Martin Luther King said Thursday his assassination apparently was caused by a government conspiracy, and that investigations into his slaying should be reopened.

"I don't have the facts but at this stage I say it appears there was a conspiracy in the death of my husband," Coretta Scott King said.

"The way he was documented and followed around by Hoover and the CIA when he was abroad, it would have to have been attached to the forces of our government that felt he was a threat to the system as it existed."

She referred to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and to the late Federal Bureau of Investigation chief, J. Edgar Hoover.

Mrs. King, on a three-nation African tour, arrived in Nairobi Wednesday. She was interviewed before a meeting with Kenyan women leaders arranged by the U.S. Information Service.

Mrs. King commented on the review ordered by Atty. Gen. Edward Levi of the FBI investigation of King's shooting death in 1968. James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to the killing in Memphis, and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

"I am very encouraged by this. I do feel with the recent investigations into the FBI and CIA we have new evidence, confirmed evidence," she said.

"I feel it requires further investigation into the death of my husband, as well as the assassinations of others from the Kennedys on.

"I think there are grounds for reopening the case. I have always felt there was more to it than came out. I also felt somehow in the long run of history it would be revealed — just what did happen."

Mrs. King told the Kenyan women Hoover tried to discredit her husband by alleging he stole some money, sought self-glorification and was sexually immoral.

The last accusation was "an effort to get me upset and turn me against him," she said. "I was never affected, because I knew his moral commitments.

"From the grave the truth has risen," Mrs. King added. "High officials now know it was Hoover and not Martin Luther King who was immoral and unjust."

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At the same time in the United States, four well-known civil rights leaders called on President Ford to reopen the investigation of the King assassination.

In Chicago, Rev. Jesse Jackson, head of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), called for a new trial for Ray and a congressional or Warren Commission-type investigation into the assassination.

"We are urging the Congress to launch a full-scale investigation into Dr. King's assassination. There are enough public doubts, unanswered questions and circumstantial evidence to merit such an investigation by the Church committee in the Senate and the Pike committee in the House.

"We want James Earl Ray back in court to stand trial . . . as he himself wants.

"Or we want a Warren Commission-type investigation of Dr. King's assassination held publicly for all the world to see."

In Washington, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Dick Gregory and Georgia state legislator Hosea Williams led a small group in picketing the White House after sending Ford a telegram calling for a new investigation into the King death.

They said two witnesses, both currently jailed on other matters, could provide evidence that King was killed as the result of a conspiracy and not by Ray's acting alone.

The three black leaders said any investigation should include evidence from Robert Byron Watson, who allegedly overheard a plot to assassinate King, and C. H. Andrews, also known as R. L. Warren, who is willing to testify to his alleged part in the plot against King if he were granted immunity from prosecution.

Watson is in federal prison at Ashland, Ky., on traffic violation convictions, and Andrews is in the Mimico Correctional Institute in Toronto.

The trio gave no details of the testimony either Andrews or Watson could offer.